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AQUILA'S GREEK VERSION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

BY THE
REV. M. ABRAHAMS, B.A.
Rabbi of the Leeds Old Hebrew Congregation

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AQUILA'S VERSION

AND THE

LATER GREEK TRANSLATIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

My distinguished predecessor in this course—Mr. H. St. John Thackeray—has explained the origin and value of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible known as the Septuagint.*

The question at once suggests itself: How did it happen that a need was felt for another Greek translation such as that of Aquila? Who wanted it? Why was it made?

The answer is that the need was partly practical, partly theological. In various sections of the Byzantine Empire, during the centuries which preceded the great Arab conquests, Greek was the language used by Jews in daily life. First among the requirements of that life was public worship. Greek-speaking Jews were not of one mind, any more than English-speaking Jews are nowadays, as to the use of the vernacular in Synagogue. But in the earlier age there were many who felt themselves insufficiently acquainted with Hebrew to understand the original Bible without the aid of a translation. It must be clearly borne in mind that there was never a question of reading the weekly lesson in Greek only. The dispute was between those who wished to read from the Scroll in Hebrew alone, and those who equally wished to read the Hebrew Scroll, but together with a Greek translation.

Perhaps the situation will be made clearest by reference to an actual historical incident which occurred in the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, who ruled from 527 to 565. During his tenancy of the throne, there came to an active stage the struggle between the sections that I have described, between those Jewish communities which desired to read the Bible in Hebrew only, and those who were anxious to read it in Greek as well. The parties applied to the Emperor. His Christian majesty very promptly and properly took advantage of the oppor-

* This lecture was delivered as part of a London University Extension Course on Translations of the Hebrew Bible. The Course was held at Toynbee Hall, London, during the Winter Session of 1918.

tunity thrust upon him. "A plague on both your houses," he said in effect. "Read the Bible, all of you, in a Christian sense, avoid your Rabbinic traditions." Indeed, the Emperor's decree declares in set phrases that the Jews were on no account to follow up the reading of the Bible with their cherished Midrashic homilies.

Before we attend to a sentence in the decree which concerns our present subject more nearly, it is hard to refrain from commenting on the stupidity of Jews bringing their internal quarrels before an external tribunal. Unhappily, in their subsequent history, Jews were not infrequently guilty of the same folly. A painful instance occurred some seven centuries after Justinian. Maimonides died in 1204, and a bitter conflict broke out between the friends and foes of his metaphysical opinions. His foes accused him of seeking to overthrow the authority of the Talmud. Accordingly, that zealous advocate of the Talmud, Solomon of Montpellier, in order, as he imagined, to rescue the Rabbinical tradition from the heresies of Maimonides, induced the Dominicans to burn the latter's works. The Dominicans gleefully consented. Very few years elapsed before they burned the Talmud also !

Let us, however, return to Justinian's decree of the year 553. As we have seen, he exhorted all the Jews to read the Bible in a Christian sense, and he went on to remark that, to those who wished to use a Greek translation, he recommended the Septuagint, but permitted the employment of Aquila's Version.

Now, apart from revealing the popularity of Aquila's Version nearly four centuries after it was made, the decree answers the questions with which we started. We see the practical grounds of the Jewish desire for a Greek Version, and we see the theological objections to the Septuagint. In Justinian's age the Septuagint was clearly regarded as a Christian work. Quite apart from the fact that the Septuagint, excellent as it was on the whole, was in many places inaccurate, from the scholarly point of view, there is no doubt that a feeling of theological antagonism to the Septuagint had long prevailed among the Jews. This was certainly the case already in the second century when Aquila flourished. The Septuagint, it is true, was originally made by Jews for Jews, but it was adopted as the inspired Bible of the Church. It is freely quoted in the New Testament, and it contained certain renderings which became objectionable to Jewish sentiment because of the use made of them in sectarian controversies. Here and there actual Christian interpolations had

apparently been made into some copies of the text of the Septuagint. One of the most famous of these additions was inserted into the 96th Psalm. Justin Martyr, who was almost a contemporary of Aquila, quotes the tenth verse of that Psalm in a very remarkable form. In the Hebrew text it runs :

“Say among the nations the Lord reigneth.” Justin quotes the sentence in the form : “Say among the nations the Lord hath reigned from the Cross.” Another example is even more curious. Both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus quote, as coming from the Hebrew Scriptures, a sentence in Greek which may be translated as follows : “He came down to preach his salvation unto Israel, that he might save them”—a verse obviously capable of a Christological interpretation. Both the Church Fathers named actually make such a use of it. Irenaeus quotes it from Isaiah, Justin from Jeremiah. Now, not only is there no such verse in the Hebrew Bible as known to us, but there is no such verse in any of the known copies of the Septuagint itself ! It must have been an addition made in certain copies of the Septuagint by Christian apologists. Yet so confident were both Justin and Irenaeus of the authenticity of their versions, that instead of recognising that their copies of the Septuagint contained a spurious interpolation, they sternly accused the Jews of having deliberately removed the whole sentence from *their* copies.

In Philo's age, the Jews of Egypt regarded the Septuagint with a reverence, as Dr. Swete puts it, “scarcely less than that which belonged to the original Hebrew.” We can hardly wonder that within a century of Philo's death the Jewish attitude towards the Septuagint had entirely changed. For that century was the one which saw the birth and early growth of the Christian Church which adopted the Septuagint as its very own, as its one and only Bible. Henceforward, all copies of the Septuagint were made by Christians, mostly in the same manuscripts as contain the New Testament. It was not till the age of De Rossi, in the sixteenth century, that Jewish scholars again interested themselves in the Septuagint, and even then their motive was literary rather than religious. At all events, enough has been said to show that the Jews of the second century had sufficient ground for desiring a fresh version. Some were in favour of a mere revision of the Septuagint. Others refused to tinker, preferring a new vessel. It was a gigantic task, but Aquila was found equal to it.

But this is not all. Without any question of *interpolation* there was a question of *interpretation*. There were phrases in

the Septuagint which Jews came to dislike. Two instances of this must suffice. The first instance is general, the second particular. The general instance concerns the word *Christos*, which merely comes from a Greek verb meaning to anoint, and thus corresponds to the Hebrew verb מָשַׁח which has the same sense. The Greek word *Christos*, like the Hebrew equivalent מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah), literally denotes "anointed." In the Septuagint the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ is quite correctly rendered *Christos*. Thus, in Daniel ix. 26, the word מָשִׁיחַ is rendered *Christos*, where the Authorised English Version has "the anointed one," the reference being probably to the High Priest Onias. But, in the New Testament, *Christos*, or Christ, was used as a personal name for the Messiah. We can realise that Jews would dislike a translation in which the word *Christos* occurred at all. In Aquila's Version the word is altogether avoided. It is also significant that whereas the Septuagint mostly renders the Hebrew name Joshua by Jesus, Aquila carefully abstains from so doing; although, among Greek Jews, Jesus must have been a fairly common personal name.

Even more interesting, however, is the special instance which I have promised to give. It is a famous, oft quoted, instance. The English Authorised Version of Isaiah vii. 14 runs: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." Now, but for one important exception, this notorious translation is ancient, going back to the Septuagint. The exception is that the English version incorrectly renders "a virgin," where, at all events, it ought to be "the Virgin" (*ha-'almah*). The difference is very great, because when the definite article is preserved it is clear that Isaiah was referring to some individual among his contemporaries. But, so far as the noun *'almah* is concerned, the Septuagint certainly renders "parthenos"—a Greek word which commonly denotes "virgin." How did the Septuagint come to use it in Isaiah? Is it a Christian alteration? Not necessarily, because there is good reason for holding that the Greek word "parthenos" by no means invariably signifies "virgin." Be that as it may, the Christian dogma of the Virgin Birth was most improperly supported by early authorities from Isaiah. I need hardly remind you that if the prophet had meant "virgin" he would have said so, and would have chosen the unequivocal Hebrew word *bethulah*, instead of the very equivocal word *'almah*, which merely denotes a woman of marriageable age, without defining whether she was already married or not. All modern Christian commentators agree with the Jewish in

holding that Isaiah was referring to some conspicuous married lady of the court, the birth of whose child was to synchronise with a startling change in the fortunes of the royal house of Judah. Now we know from Justin Martyr that the Jews of the first half of the second century strongly objected to the Septuagint rendering of the passage. The Jews maintained that the correct translation of *'almah* was not "parthenos" but "neanis," not virgin but young woman. It is unfortunate that we have no English word which exactly corresponds to "neanis"; "damsel" comes nearest. But my point is that the very word "neanis" is the one chosen by Aquila, and this fact explains why, on the one hand, the Emperor Justinian—Christian as he was—preferred the Septuagint, while the Jews of his day were fonder of Aquila. It is interesting to note that Aquila's rendering of Isaiah vii. 14 which has always been a favourite with Jews, has been adopted in the new Jewish Version recently published in America, a translation on which the Chief Rabbi will speak in the last lecture of this course.

Let it not be thought that, in these remarks, I am attaching too much importance to variations of this nature between Aquila and the Septuagint. Epiphanius, in fact, asserts that the sole purpose of Aquila was precisely to introduce these variations. So, too, with Irenaeus. In his "Treatise against Heresies," written about the year 200, he devotes the whole of the twenty-first chapter of Book III. to a vigorous attack on what he calls the misinterpretation of Isaiah vii. 14, by Theodotion of Ephesus and Aquila of Pontus, both, as Irenaeus says, proselytes to Judaism. Against Aquila, Irenaeus quotes the Septuagint, and makes great play with the argument that the Septuagint, made in pre-Christian times by Jews, confirmed the Christian interpretation of the text in question. "If," adds Irenaeus, "these Jewish translators had foreseen Christianity, and that we should use these proofs from the Scriptures, they would never have hesitated themselves to burn them." The Jews had no call to burn their Bible, but they clearly had good reason for rejecting the earlier Greek translation of it. Besides, and this is an important consideration, it must have been most distasteful to use in worship a work which played so prominent a rôle in disputes between Synagogue and Church.

The real need for Aquila's Version of the Bible went far beyond any of these considerations. New ideas as to interpretation, soon to grow into a tradition, had arisen in Jewry. It was clearly fitting that these new ideas should find expression in a new

rendering. In order to understand this aspect of our subject, it is necessary to turn to the biography of Aquila, and to discuss briefly his relation to the Biblical interpretation of his age.

For the biography of Aquila we are dependent on two sources, the one Christian, the other Jewish. Both sources mix fact with fiction, but they agree in the main outlines, which may be regarded as historical. From Epiphanius we learn that Aquila's birth-place was Sinope in Pontus. This ancient Greek Colony, situate on the Black Sea, was in Aquila's time under the dominion of Rome. Friedmann has, indeed, suggested that the Pontus where Aquila was born was not in Asia Minor, but in Syria, in the Lebanon district. This theory has not found acceptance. Epiphanius further records that Aquila was a relative of the Emperor Hadrian, and that having witnessed various miraculous healings by Christians, he joined that faith. Owing, however, to his determined resolve to practise magic, he was excommunicated by the Church, and, in revenge, attached himself to the Synagogue, devoting himself to the task of removing Christian evidences from the Bible. This statement, that Aquila reached Judaism via Christianity, seems unfounded, and the story probably arises from a confusion between our translator and the tent-maker of the same name who came from the same place and is associated with Priscilla in the New Testament. The name Aquila, it should be observed, was not an uncommon one, being both Roman and Jewish. It is a Latin name, and seems to mean Eagle, thus being equivalent to the surname of the lecturer who will address you later in this course—I refer to Mr. Adler.

The Jewish account agrees in the main with that of Epiphanius, except that it knows nothing of Aquila's previous conversion to Christianity. In the Talmud he is uniformly referred to as "Aquilas, the Proselyte." Dr. Louis Ginzberg, however, fancies that he can detect in the Jewish account some trace of the story told by Epiphanius. The whole of Dr. Ginzberg's article (*J.E.* vol. ii.) is very valuable.

The Midrash is more precise as to Aquila's royal connexions, for it describes him as the son of Emperor Hadrian's sister. The same source reports that at an early age Aquila was attracted to Judaism, but fear of his imperial and imperious uncle restrained him from giving effect to his predilections. The time came, however, when Aquila was released from this control. For Hadrian sent his nephew on his travels, with the design of familiarising him with different parts of the world, and with the

customs of their inhabitants. Though the journey was not commercial, Hadrian gave his kinsman one piece of business advice. He counselled him "to invest in what stood at a low price, but was likely to rise in value." Aquila went to Palestine. According to Epiphanius, this part of the journey was made because of Hadrian's commission to Aquila to superintend, in the year 117, the transformation of Jerusalem into a heathen city, with the name Aelia Capitolina. It was in Jerusalem, according to Epiphanius, that Aquila became a Christian, afterwards changing that religion for Judaism. The Midrash tells how Aquila attended the discourses of the famous Rabbis Eliezer and Joshua. His masters were amazed at his zealous devotion to his studies, being astounded to witness how their pupil wore himself out in body while nourishing his mind. Just as in the earlier annals of Hillel and Shammai, the former is reputed as having been gentle, and the latter severe, towards would-be proselytes, so (as Bacher remarks) Joshua and Eliezer play the rôles of Hillel and Shammai with reference to Aquila. For, once Aquila read before R. Eliezer the verse (Deut. x. 18): "The Lord loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment." The pupil exclaimed: "Is this the whole reward of Judaism, bread to eat and a garment to wear?" R. Eliezer angrily retorted, "What was good enough for Jacob, is good enough for Aquila." Repulsed by this rough treatment, Aquila betook himself to Joshua with the same question. Joshua explained that the bread was the Law, and the garment the tallith, the sign of God's providence over Israel. It was the soft answer of Joshua that saved for Judaism one whom the harshness of Eliezer would have driven away.

The story next carries us back to Rome. On his return thither, Aquila informed the Emperor of his conversion to Judaism. Various dialogues are recorded between the two on the subject. Hadrian asked Aquila why he had become a Jew in order to study the Law; surely he could have read the Bible without adopting the religion which it teaches. Aquila replied that no soldier could draw his pay unless he wore the uniform and bore arms. On another occasion Hadrian asked Aquila how he could justify the opinion of the Jews that the basis of life was spiritual not material. Aquila had a string of camels brought before the Emperor, and made the animals kneel and rise several times. He then directed the camels to be suffocated. In that condition naturally they were unable to rise. "Of course they cannot rise," cried Hadrian, "they have been choked." "Yes,"

replied Aquila, "they only need a little breath." By this parabolical action Aquila implied, not very conclusively one must admit, that life is spiritual, not material.

Most effective, however, was Aquila's answer to Hadrian's inquiry: "Who put it into your head to become a Jew?" "Thou art the man," replied Aquila. "Hast thou forgotten thy parting advice that I must invest in what was low in price though likely to rise? Well, I found nothing held in such low esteem as the Law and Israel, but both will assuredly rise, as the prophet has foretold: "Kings shall see and stand; Princes, and they shall worship" (Isaiah xlix. 7).

Another besides Eliezer and Joshua is named among Aquila's teachers. This other was Akiba, the hero alike of romance, scholarship, and patriotism. Akiba died a martyr about the year 132, as a result of his participation in Bar Cochba's revolt. Now, apart from his other activities, "Akiba," to quote Dr. Ginzberg, "was the one who definitely fixed the canon of the Old Testament Books." He it was who brought about a final decision as to the list of books which should be regarded as belonging to the Hebrew Bible. It was due to him also that certain books of the Apocrypha were excluded. Jerome attempted (with imperfect success) to render a similar service to the Roman Church.

But Akiba was not merely concerned with fixing the list, he was interested in defining the meaning. Every word, every syllable was to Akiba significant. Not that Akiba stood alone in this view, not that he originated it. But it was due to his personality that the principle was generally adopted. The deep contemplation of Scripture required a strict attention to every particle, even though to the modern mind these particles were mere grammatical forms. It is not germane to the present lecture to discuss the details of Rabbinic exegesis, but I must remind you of one familiar point. This concerns the particle **את** which is the usual Hebrew sign of the objective case. Now, in the age of Akiba, Rabbinic hermeneutics held that the particle **את** (no less than **אף** and **גם**) indicated that something was *added* to the meaning. Thus, the first verse of Genesis runs:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ :

which we render: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here, grammatically regarded, the words **את** before **השמים** and **את** before **הארץ** merely show that

“heavens” and “earth” are the object of the verb create. Akiba and his school were not satisfied with this. The particle **אֵת** in front of “heavens” included sun, moon, and stars; while the same particle **וְאֵת** in front of “earth” includes trees, plants, and the Garden of Eden.

When we turn to Aquila we find the clearest possible reminiscence of this type of exegesis. For how does Aquila render the first verse of Genesis? “In the beginning—created—God—with the heaven—and with the earth” (ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν). This is of course impossible Greek, for *σὺν* ought to be followed by the dative case. In other words, Aquila translated **אֵת** not as a mere sign of the objective case, but as having a significant meaning outside the simple syntax of the sentence.

Let us examine a few other specimens of Aquila’s method. It is not possible to offer many examples. At all events our illustrations must be chosen where they can be understood without the text before us. This proviso is necessary, because to do justice it would be obligatory to enter into details which would be unintelligible unless we held in our hands, and before our eyes, both the original Hebrew and Aquila’s Greek. Those who wish to make a close study of the subject can now do so with an ease previously impossible. Dr. Joseph Reider has contributed to volumes iv. and vii. of the new series of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* a number of illuminating articles which are distinguished for mass of information and thoroughness of criticism. But for our part we must be content with a few clear illustrations which can be followed without books. We will begin with his reliance on Rabbinic exegesis. Let us take one instance from the Pentateuch and one from the Psalms. In Genesis ii. 18, the creation of Eve is described. The Hebrew runs **אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֹזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ**. The English Version translated: “I will make him a help meet for him.” Aquila presents what, at first sight, seems an inconsistent sentiment, “We will make for him a help as against him.” Much ridicule has been poured on this rendering, which calls the woman in the same sentence a help and a hindrance to her husband. But, as Dr. Taylor observed, this is exactly how the Midrash interprets the verse. It is not a contradiction but two alternatives. **זָכָה עֹזֶר** —If the husband be worthy, his wife is **עֹזֶר** his help; but if he be unworthy, she is **כְּנֶגְדּוֹ** against him. Aquila, in short, translates according to this Midrash.

Now let us turn to the twenty-second Psalm, which was a

bone of contention between the Jews and the early Christian apologists. In the Authorised Version, verse 16 (17) runs thus :

For dogs have compassed me,
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me,
They pierced my hands and my feet.

The verse is admittedly difficult, and the reading of the Hebrew text open to dispute. But the English version just quoted is derived from the Septuagint, which was applied by Christians to the founder of their faith. In particular, the last phrase, "they pierced my hands and my feet," was misapplied to the crucifixion. Aquila, as Dr. Taylor again points out, translates very remarkably :

They made my hands and feet ugly.

How did he arrive at this rendering ? The answer is simple. The whole of the twenty-second Psalm is applied by the Midrash to Queen Esther. The opening words of the Psalm :

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me—

were Esther's lament on the three nights of her fast. And so, in the verse before us, according to the Midrash :

For dogs have compassed me—

the dogs are the sons of Haman ;

The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me—

the wicked are Haman's retainers ;

"They made my hands and feet ugly"

—"these rascals," so R. Judah represents Esther as complaining "applied enchantments against me, to render my hands and feet ugly in the eyes of Ahasuerus. But a miracle was wrought in my behalf, and my hands and feet were as sapphires." This Midrashic commentary at once explains Aquila's rendering of the verse.

Incidentally, I may remark that Psalm xxii. is read in the Sephardic Synagogues on the eve of Purim because of the same traditional association of the passage with the story of Esther.

But it would be a grave error to conceive of Aquila as a Midrashic translator. On the contrary, he was an extreme literalist. The most characteristic quality of his work is his regular habit of following the Hebrew text slavishly, word for word. Such phrases as the following abound in Aquila :—Genesis v. 5, "And the days that Adam lived were 900 year and 30 year" ; Genesis i. 4, "And God divided between the light and between

the darkness"; Isaiah xxiv. 2, "And it shall be as the servant as his master"; Numbers i. 4, "And with you they shall be a man a man to the tribe." Similarly with place names. Aquila often translates their meanings. He does the same with common nouns. Thus, he does not give us the usual "corn, wine, and oil" for the Hebrew **יֵצֶהר, תִּירֶשׁ, רֶנֶן**, but prefers the phrases "flow, vintage, brilliance"—as nearer the original. Jerome ridicules this precision, though the Church Father had a high opinion of Aquila and made use of him in the Vulgate. Such examples of extreme literalness could be indefinitely increased. The renderings make bad English; they also made bad Greek. Dr. Reider defends Aquila's Greek from attack by pointing to his wealth of words, his facility in creating new terms, his undoubted faculty for finding Greek equivalents very close in sound to the Hebrew. But this defence is not relevant to the charge. One may have a very copious vocabulary and yet write very far from idiomatically. Aquila was, of course, an accomplished Graecist and was well acquainted with Greek terminology. But when he translated the Scriptures his intention was not to write good Greek prose, but to reproduce the original as closely as he could. For many centuries, Aquila's version was mainly known from quotations made by Origen in his famous "Hexapla," of which only fragments survived. There were also quotations in Patristic literature, including the Rabbinic. Certain of Aquila's renderings (nine in all) are quoted in the Rabbinic books. One of them, by the way, is very striking. It occurs in Proverbs xviii. 21, where the Authorised Version correctly renders: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Aquila renders, "Spoon and knife are in the power of the tongue." This makes good sense in the context, if we suppose that spoon and knife are somehow symbols of life and death. But it is very unlike Aquila's usual literalness, unless (as Dr. Reider suggests) it be that he had some now unknown philological or Midrashic basis for his quaint choice of terms.

It was from such fragments that the world knew Aquila's work until the treasures of the past were recovered from the Genizah, or rubbish heap of Old Cairo. Amid much else, some sections of Aquila were found. The importance of the discovery was that we now possess some fairly long, continuous passages, instead of mere words and phrases. These new Aquila texts are written in bold uncial Greek. One peculiarity was long suspected, and is now proved true. In some ancient references to Aquila it was recorded that he did not translate the name of

God, but wrote it in Hebrew. Now, this is exactly what we find in the new Aquila texts. The Tetragrammaton is invariably written in Hebrew, not in the square letters we are familiar with, but in the ancient characters found on inscriptions and coins. Another curiosity of the new texts is that they are palimpsests, that is, one writing has been superposed on another. The lower writing is Aquila, the upper a Hebrew liturgical composition. This fact confirms what we already knew, that Aquila was for long eras used in the Synagogue service. But besides these curiosities, the newly-recovered continuous passages from Aquila clearly prove that the attacks on his Greek style were just. As Professor Burkitt says of the Aquila texts published by him, "It is certain that Greek more uncouth than his has never before issued from the Cambridge University Press." If Aquila had read Professor Burkitt's judgment, he would probably have rejoined: "Just so! I was not out to give you the elegant Greek of an Academic Prize Poem, but an exact reproduction of the Hebrew." In fact, it is precisely this feature of Aquila's work that has given it lasting importance. Had he written better Greek, used freer methods, he would now be of far less value than he is. For, as Professor Burkitt justly says, Aquila's version "certainly marks the beginning of a thorough exegesis of the Old Testament." We must remember that Philo had evolved so elaborate a system of allegorical interpretation that the true sense of the text was in jeopardy. Aquila once for all put a stop to that dangerous procedure, and "his method of translating verbatim, with absolute adherence to the original text, paved the way for the modern historical and philological method of interpretation."

On the other hand, as we have seen, Aquila reproduces much of that special Midrashic interpretation which is homiletic rather than scientific. Aquila thus deserves both the epithets applied to him by early critics, who termed him, on the one hand, "the Jewish translator," and on the other, the "slave of the Hebrew letter." He was, indeed, both traditionalist and literalist. It was, perhaps, because of both of these qualities that his teachers, Eliezer and Joshua, uttered concerning him their noble eulogy. There is, in their panegyric, a play on the word יָפִיּוּת, which means, "thou art fair," but also contains a suggestion of the language of Japhet, *i.e.*, Greece. And so these Rabbis applied to Aquila the glorious phrases of Psalm xlv. 3: "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God has blessed thee for ever."

Aquila did not stand alone in the second century as a translator of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. There are two others whose names have come down to us, and there were others also quoted by Origen, but not named. The two whose personalities are preserved were named Symmachus and Theodotion. Of neither of these does Jewish literature make mention, but the Christian Fathers supply some information. Symmachus is variously termed a Samaritan convert to Judaism and an Ebionite. The Ebionites were a sect semi-Jewish, semi-Christian. They accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but denied his divinity. The Ebionites agreed with the Jewish translators in disputing the Christological exegesis of the Church. It may be noted that a pupil of R. Meir was named Symmachus, but there is no real ground for identifying him with Symmachus the translator. The method of Symmachus is entirely unlike that of Aquila, although Aquila's work was used by him. Symmachus is distinguished just for what Aquila lacks, Greek style. His language is free from Hebraisms, and in Jerome's verdict "renders not the words but the sense." There must evidently have been, especially among Greek-speaking converts to Judaism, a desire for better Greek than Aquila's combined with truer sense than the Septuagint. On the whole, this is what Symmachus provided. His work is thoroughly Greek and also thoroughly Jewish. In certain respects it is even more Jewish than Aquila's. For one of his specialities is his avoidance of phrases which appear to speak of God in human terms. The following specimens (cited by Dr. Swete) will make this peculiarity clear. Genesis i. 27, "God created man in his (the man's) special image, upright (in stature) did God make him," unlike the other animals. Symmachus avoids the anthropomorphism of speaking of man as made in God's image. Again, in Exodus xxiv. 10, where we are told that Moses and his comrades went up the mount "and saw the God of Israel," Symmachus paraphrases: "they saw *in a vision* the God of Israel." When, in the parable of the trees, in Judges ix. 13, wine is spoken of poetically as cheering God and man, Symmachus omits the reference to God altogether. So, too, in Psalm xlv. 24, when the Psalmist exclaims, in his agony, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" Symmachus softens it into, "Why art thou as one asleep, O Master?" Renderings of this class are common in the Targums. One further instance of the familiarity of Symmachus with Jewish Midrash must suffice. He translates Lamech's address to his wives (Genesis iv. 24) thus: "In the seventh generation shall Cain be punished." This com-

pletely accords with the Midrash, which asserts that Cain enjoyed a respite till the seventh generation when Lamech accidentally killed him.

On the whole, however, Symmachus was a Greek rather than a Hebrew in his translation, being truer to Greek style than to the original text. He stood at the one extreme, just as Aquila stands at the other.

Between the two, in method, as well as in point of time, stands Theodotion. Like Aquila and Symmachus, Theodotion is traditionally described as a proselyte to Judaism. It is extraordinary that Onkelos, the reputed author of the Aramaic Version of the Pentateuch, was also a proselyte. The relation of Aquila to Onkelos must be left to my successor in this course, who will deal with the Aramaic versions in general, and Onkelos in particular. It is, I repeat, extraordinary that so many translators are reputed to have been proselytes, yet an explanation is not impossible. Such men came fresh to the study of Hebrew as adults, they must, for their own needs, have turned the Hebrew into the vernacular, and, having done so, would thus be the most likely people to become translators also for the use of other Jews. Moreover, they may have had in mind others like themselves, who needed instruction in the Bible through the means of a translation in order to bring them, again like themselves, under the wings of the Divine Presence. To return from this side issue, it may be said that while Aquila and Symmachus were original translators, Theodotion was a reviser. He revised the Septuagint with the Hebrew text, however, before him. Two points about Theodotion must be mentioned. In the first instance he very often reproduces Hebrew words in Greek characters without translating them. No explanation has been so far offered of this peculiarity. It is universally agreed that it cannot be due to ignorance. Why, then, should Theodotion leave some of the commonest words untranslated and merely spell out the Hebrew in Greek letters? I venture to offer an explanation. We know from Origen's "Hexapla" that it was not a strange practice to spell out the *whole* of the Hebrew text in this way. Origen's "Hexapla" is arranged in six columns: First, the Hebrew text; second, a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek letters; third, Aquila; fourth, Symmachus; fifth, the Septuagint; and sixth, Theodotion. We have only to suppose that copies of Theodotion similarly contained *all* the Hebrew in Greek letters, and that some words lost their way from the transliteration into the translation. The second point

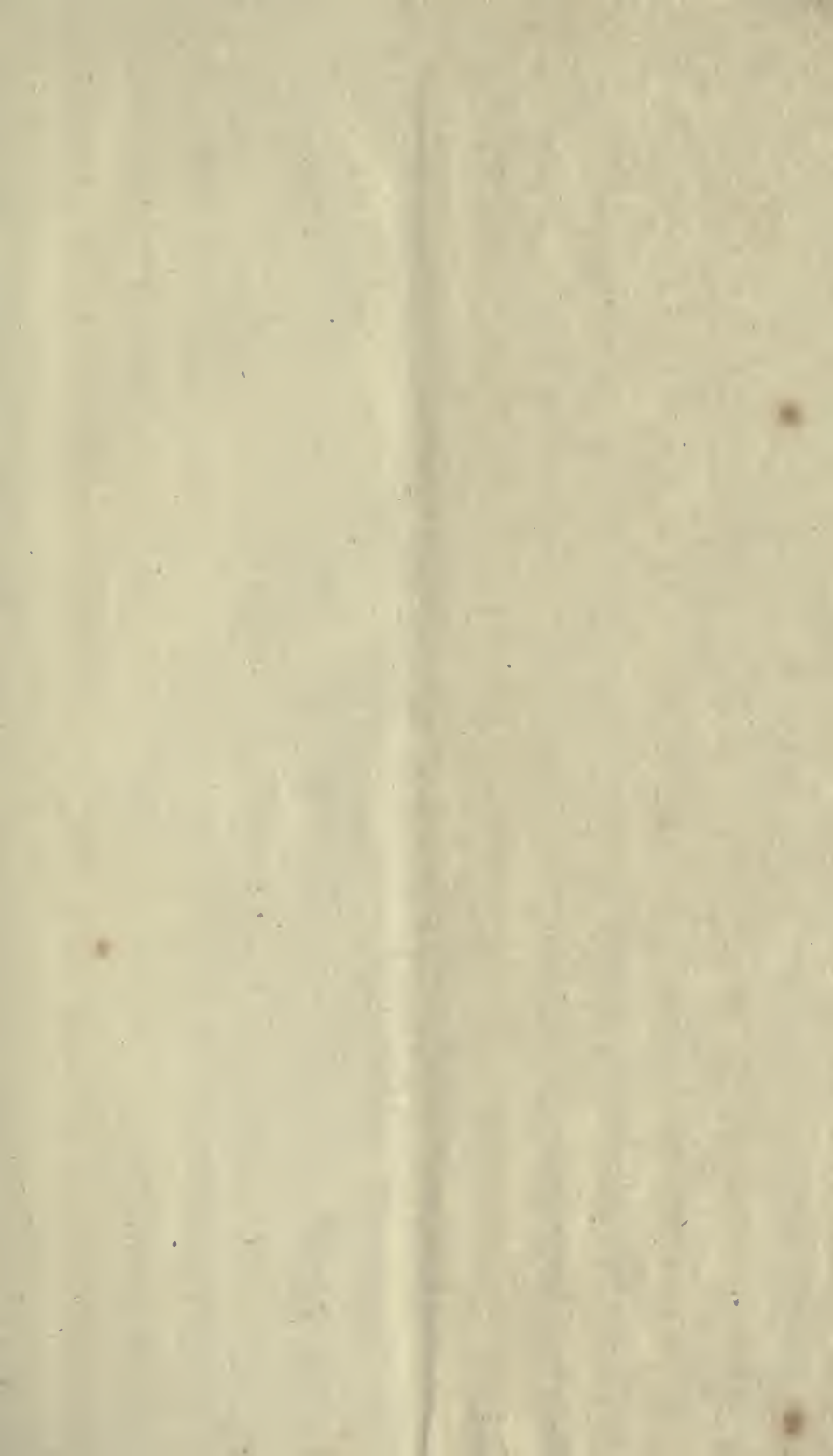
about Theodotion is that his version of Daniel became so popular that it replaced the Septuagint even in the manuscripts of the Septuagint itself.

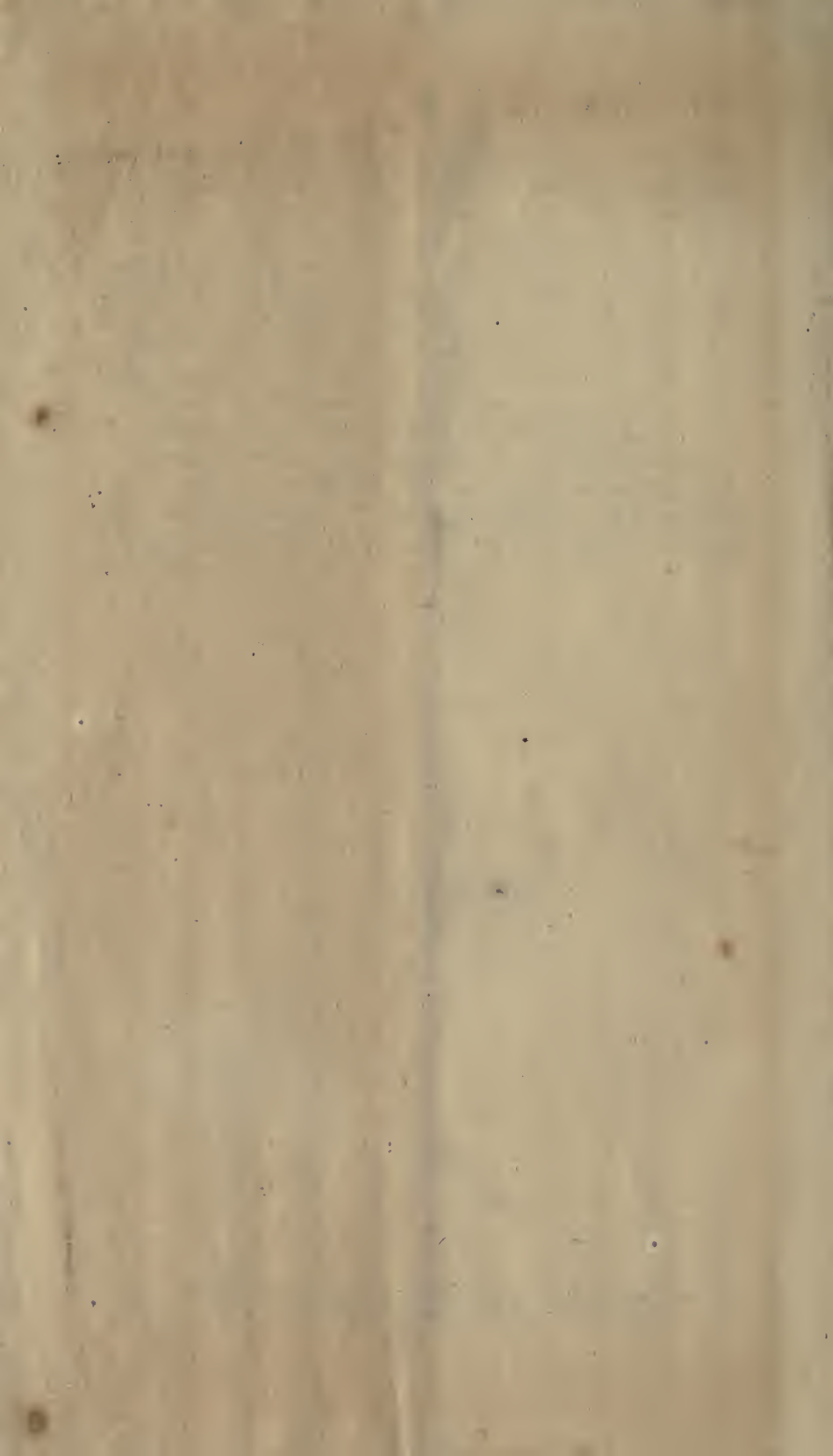
From the second century onwards, these Greek translations continued in vogue. The most popular, of course, were the Septuagint in Church circles, and Aquila in Jewish. We have seen how Aquila was used in the Byzantine Synagogues in the sixth century. Indeed, Greek remained a favourite language of the Jews in the East until Arabic took its place after the rise of Mohammed. But it stands to reason, that, even after that stupendous event, there remained many Greek-speaking Jews who needed Greek translations. They no longer used the ancient renderings of which we have so far spoken, but made fresh ones in more modern Greek. One such translation was made in the fourteenth century. It is known as the Venetus, and is said to betray the influence of Kimchi. I believe that one authority holds the Venetus to be older and to show evidence of being pre-Massoretic. One peculiarity of the Venetus deserves mention. It commonly translates the Name of God by *Ontôtês*, with reference to God's Existence. This reminds us of the rendering "the Eternal," adopted by some English-speaking Jews from the Continental fashion of the Mendelssohn school. The translation "the Eternal," is not acceptable, because the Name probably means not He-who-is, but He-who-causes-to-be. It is far better to render it, according to the traditional pronunciation *Adonai*, by "Lord."

More interesting than the Venetus from the popular point of view is the polyglot Hebrew Pentateuch, printed in Constantinople in 1547. It contains the Hebrew text, the commentary of Rashi, and three translations, all in Hebrew letters. One is Aramaic, the other Spanish, the third neo-Greek. The Jews of the Turkish Empire made much use both of Greek and Spanish. As regards Spanish, the London Sephardim continued until quite lately to translate the haphtarah for the ninth of Ab into Spanish during the Synagogue service. Similarly with the Greek. We know that, in the Middle Ages, the Book of Jonah was translated into Greek in Corfu, during the afternoon of the Day of Atonement. And, no doubt, such versions are still employed, for private study if not in public devotion, by the Greek-speaking Jews of our time.

From the literary point of view, there have been translations superior to those made in Greek. Neither the Septuagint nor Aquila can compare in literary importance either with Luther's

translation or the English Authorised Version. But when we turn from the history of literature to the history of religion the relative importance of the Greek over other versions manifests itself. For these Greek versions were pioneers, they fixed the meanings of many words, for the sense of which they are, with the Targum, practically the only ancient authorities. And they not only gave the lead in defining Hebrew thought; they also propagated it. The Septuagint popularised the Bible in non-Jewish circles; Aquila helped to preserve it among the Jews themselves. The Torah is, in the Bible, compared to a Light. The translator is the Priest, who tends the Light, kindles lamp from lamp, spreading far and wide the one original illumination. Aquila, to continue this metaphor, was a Light to Israel, the Septuagint a Light to the Nations. Between them they helped the Bible to the position it has ever since retained as a Light to the World.





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